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Memorandum of Conversation

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DECLASSIFIED
Authority ND 901066
By HR-M/SG, NARA, Date 6/2/91

DATE: March 17, 1959

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SUBJECT: Berlin Contingency Planning

Recategorized as
Category "A"

PARTICIPANTS: White House
The President
General Andrew Goodpaster
General Wilton Persons
Mr. Gordon Gray

7s/ Warren A. Henderson

OCT 11 1965

State
Christian A. Herter, Acting Secretary
Robert Murphy, Deputy Under Secretary
Livingston T. Merchant, Asst Secy-European Affairs
Gerard C. Smith, Asst Secy-Policy Planning

Defense
Neil McElroy, Secretary
Donald A. Quarles, Deputy Secretary
John N. Irwin II, Assistant Secy for NSA
General W. F. Twining, Chairman, JCS

GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE 10-01120-1

The President read the joint State-Defense memorandum
of March 17 on Berlin contingency planning.

The President asked about the significance of the test flights over 10,000 feet. When he reached the "no substitution" point, he observed that Adenauer was the strongest proponent of this theory. Personally, the President preferred the Department of Defense position, but pointed out that we were not dealing alone in this matter. On balance, he felt we should probably stick to our present position, but he seemed to be anticipating that we would eventually be pushed away from it by our allies.

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Mr. Gray observed that one could not give an answer to the substitution question until the State-Defense team (referred to in paragraph 3 of the above-mentioned paper) had reported on Soviet current access control practices.

The President pointed out the dilemma of trying to stiffen Macmillan's back at the same time that one hopes that he will win an election.

The President said that he would like to have the studies made, as proposed in paragraph 4(c).

The President asked if the force referred to in paragraph 7 would involve shooting. He speculated as to whether our allies would go along with us on one of these courses of action if negotiations with the Russians failed.

The President asked that we also study the question of economic embargoes.

General Twining said that the Navy had prepared a paper on "heckling" which was being studied by their lawyers.

The President said on the question of counter-blockade that we should not go into it until there had been a definite

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provocation. It should only be as a reprisal and not as pressure (in the absence of Soviet aggression) to try to get a political solution favorable to the Western powers.

On the subject of whether or not the original probe should involve a scout car, the President observed that we needed a minimal amount of force to demonstrate forcible blockage. He asked a number of questions about the personnel on the trucks. There appeared to be no clear decision as to whether the original test would be merely with a convoy without a scout car or a convoy with a scout car.

On the subject of the moves proposed by the Chiefs, Secretary McElroy said that we had already stopped reducing forces in Europe but that he had opposed moves to restore previous force cuts. The President said that he recalled having agreed to defer further force cuts in Europe. Secretary McElroy said that by April 1 we would be within 1,500 men of the June 30 objective. At that point we would need to ship back 7,000-9,000 men if the Seventh Army was to be restored to its previous strength. The President recognized that such a move might have psychological value. Secretary McElroy pointed out that perhaps we should save such a move until a later time when we wanted to sharply demonstrate our determination.

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Secretary McElroy pointed out that restoration could be made in the military force in Europe without reaching the 870,000 ceiling. The President directed that we should not further reduce our forces in Europe and that at the psychologically appropriate time additional troops could be shipped to Europe to restore the Seventh Army to its previous level.

The President approved the balance of the Joint Chiefs' proposals.

The President then reverted to paragraph 7 of the paper and asked General Twining what was meant by the term "A substantial effort to reopen ground access by local action" -- was that 4-5 divisions? General Twining said "no, it was a small force (one division or so)." General Twining said that if more than approximately one division was needed it would not be fruitful to pursue that course. The purpose of this move would be to require the Soviets to respond in sufficient force so that they would realize they were initiating general war. General Twining pointed out that further studies of the implications of possible moves in force should be made.

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Governor Hertler pointed to paragraph 5, involving "concessions for the sake of unity". The President said that the mere fact that we were agreeable to negotiating with the Soviets implied some flexibility in our position. Surely we could modify our position in some respects, but on basic matters we would not modify our position.

The President then asked about the point at which we might take action which would be a specific warning to the Soviets of the increasingly serious nature of the crisis--such as evacuation of dependents. It was pointed out that under present planning this would not come until after K-Day.

The President suggested that it might be a good idea to have knowledgeable people stand by to brief him and Prime Minister Macmillan at Camp David on our thinking about Berlin contingency planning.

S/P:GCCSmith

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

POLICY PLANNING STAFF

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March 20, 1959

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Reclassified as
Category "A"
/s/ Warren A. Henderson

MEMORANDUM

OCT 11 1965

To: U - The Acting Secretary
From: S/P - Gerard C. Smith
Subject: Berlin Contingency Planning

In reference to the meeting with the President on March 17 concerning Berlin contingency planning, (memo attached) you noted a reservation to that part of the paper jointly submitted by you and Secretary McElroy, which proposed a change in present contingency planning. The change was proposed by the Secretary of Defense and would call for the first convoy after the Soviet turn-over to be unaccompanied by a scout car. If the first convoy was blocked, then a scout car or similar vehicle would accompany the next convoy.

It is my recollection that your reservation was not specifically considered at the meeting. Accordingly, in my record of the meeting I noted that it appeared that no definite decision was taken by the President to change our present contingency planning on this point.

Before the meeting with the President, Mr. Irwin had indicated to me his agreement with your reservation. I understand that the JCS feel that the President has made a decision to change our planning in this respect.

I have asked Mr. Irwin to look into this matter from the military point of view, and Mr. Mathews to follow it in State.

I thought you should be aware of this possible ambiguity since the matter may come up during the Macmillan talks.

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